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Prototypes of Meredithian characters

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PROTOTYPES
OF
MEREDITHIAN CHARACTERS

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

"If a man's work is to be of value the best of him must be in it,"[1] wrote George Meredith to Mrs. J.B. Gilman of Concord, Massachussetts. To this credo he subscribed during his long career as a writer. The rare gifts of a richly endowed nature he brought to his work, for he was a philosopher, a poet, a humorist, and a subtle psychologgist. The characters he created in his novels add much to his merit as a writer and it is with the delineation of certain of these characters and their prototypes in actual life, that I propose to deal.

In concurrence with the opinion that Meredith's characters are of outstanding excellence is Oscar Wilde's statement which appeared in The Fortnightly Review in 1891, as follows:

> To him belongs philosophy in fiction. His people not merely live, but they live in thought. One can see them from myriad points of view. They are suggestive. There is a soul in them and around them. They are interpretative and symbolic...He is an incomparable novelist.[2]

[1] Letters of George Meredith, II, 409.

[2] R.E. Sencourt, George Meredith, 285.

Priestley's comment regarding Meredithian characters is in point:

> His finest characters have been so intensely imagined, have so much vitality, that they live in our imagination, like all really great characters, as creatures larger than life-size, human enough, as Falstaff, and Macbeth and Cleopatra are human, and yet, like them, having in them--as Meredith said of his great scenes--'a pitch considerably above our common human.'[1]

The testimony of Stevenson, Barrie, Henley, Photiades, and many other critics who believed Meredith's skill in character portrayal to be of Shakespearean caliber, is corrorborated by the French scholars, Legouis and Cazamian in the following statement:

> The psychology of Meredith perceives the inner life as essentially in motion; it throbs with a thrill of discovery and surprise; it is keen like the sudden rush of an emotion, quick like the fluctuations of an agitated soul; it is incomparable in its power of instantaneously catching the most evanescent shades. Creative as it is in every detail of its expression, this analysis is of an order superior to that of Browning.
>
> The characters upon which it is brought to bear are remarkable in their number, variety and substance; many of them have the minutely detailed features, the several planes of increasing depth, peculiar to the beings whom our familiar acquaintance has probed below the surface...Lucy, Vittoria, Clara, Renee, Diana, Aminta, Nesta, through their freshness, their purity, their courage, and at the same time their sure, intuitive intelligence, are not unworthy of their Shakespearean sisters. The imagination which has created them has added to the treasure of human nobleness some of its most graceful and most brilliant visions.[2]

[1] J.B. Priestly, George Meredith, (English Men of Letters Series), 173.

[2] E. Legouis and L. Cazamian, A History of English Literature, 1276.

An important factor to be considered in any attempt to account for Meredith's admirable portraiture is his use of people he knew in life as models from which he drew a number of his fictional heroes and heroines. I shall endeavor to point out that his use of prototypes has added to his veracity of character delineation.

In an effort to determine how nearly the fictional characters resembled the people who suggested their creation, I consulted the biographical accounts that are available, giving particular attention to the chief characters. The Life of Mrs. Norton by J.G. Perkins was used when the writer compared Caroline Norton with Diana in Diana of the Crossways. The Fourth Generation; Reminiscences by Janet Ross was very helpful in providing an account of the Duff Gordon family who figure in Evan Harrington. Little has been put on record concerning Admiral Maxse who lives again in the pages of Beauchamp's Career as its hero. The accounts given of him in the critical works of Hammerton and Ellis are very brief.

Meredith's men and women are his own creations, of course, just as Reynold's portraits are his. However, Meredith idealized some characters much more than others; and Beauchamp may be an idealization of Maxse, but to me

the motives that impelled them to act as they did, the ideals and hopes that lured them on, seem very much the same.

It is generally believed that the Socrates of Plato's dialogues is an idealized Socrates, but it is this image of the philosopher in the dialogues that has dominated the imagination of men for two thousand years. Is our ideal Socrates the true Socrates? Yes, for sometimes an idealized likeness gets closer to the real object than the duller but more accurate likeness--just as a painting of a great artist is truer than a photograph. Likewise, unselfish, courageous Beauchamp is true to the spirit of Admiral Maxse who inspired the portrait.

Since the influence of personal history and social background is quite pronounced in Meredith's pictures of life, and in his choice of characters, I shall at this time give certain biographical facts which seem to be significant, for in writing he utilized experience, specifically in characters and generally in background.

George Meredith was born in Portsmouth, England, in 1828, of parents in both of whom there were rather remote strains of Celtic blood: Welsh in his father, Irish in his mother. His father, the spendthrift Augustus Armstrong Meredith, after the death of his wife, went to live in London, and later in Cape Town, South Africa, leaving his young son George to the care of relatives. Meredith's

early education was desultory. He went to school in Portsmouth but he said he learned very little there. At the age of fourteen he was sent to the Moravian school at Neuwied on the Rhine; here he became acquainted with Continental literature. From this time we date his first vivid and lasting impressions of the Rhine which bore fruit later in several books--among them Farina, The Adventures of Harry Richmond, and One of Our Conquerors. After two years' sojourn in Germany he returned at the age of sixteen to London and was articled to R.S. Charnock, a lawyer. However, he had no taste for the law and his income was very meager. Frequently at this time he lived on a single bowl of porridge a day. He read widely in the classics and devoted himself to the study of German literature. To writing as a career he turned naturally, seeing in it a means for the expression of his love of nature and his philosophy of life. The connection with Charnock was important, for he was a man of literary tastes and gifts and his circle of friends included many of the young artists and writers of the time. It was largely under Charnock's auspices that a coterie of these writers started in 1848 a literary manuscript magazine entitled The Monthly Observer, to which articles and drawings were contributed. Each member interested

in it took turns as editor and each number was circulated amnng the members for criticism. It was in this magazine that Meredith's first poem "Chillianwallah" appeared in 1849. Among other contributors were Edward Peacock and Mrs. Mary Ellen Nicolls, son and daughter of Thomas Love Peacock, the novelist. From Peacock, so Lord Morley believed, Meredith as a young man acquired marked qualities of style and thought. In 1849 Meredith was married to Peacock's daughter, a woman of great brilliancy. The first years of their marriage were spent on the continent. Meredith had abandoned the law before he left England and upon his return went into journalism, wrote poetry, and began novel writing. He and his wfe separated, and a few years later she died. Psychological reflections concerning his married life are found in the long poem "Modern Love" which appeared in 1862. In this poem he traces the course of their estrangement. In 1864 he married Marie Vulliamy. In tribute to her he wrote, after her death in 1885, the poem "Faith On Trial."

CHAPTER II

MEREDITH'S LITERARY AND PERSONAL ASSOCIATIONS WITH WRITERS, ARTISTS, AND OTHER FRIENDS

Meredith enjoyed the companionship of the best minds in England. Among his intimate friends were R.L. Stevenson; James M. Barrie; Sir Leslie Stephen, editor of the Cornhill Magazine; Sir John Morley, editor of the Fortnightly Review; Maurice Fitzgerald (nephew of Edward Fitzgerald, the translator); Sir William Hardman, editor of the Morning Post; Admiral William Maxse; Frederick Greenwood, editor of the Pall Mall Gazette; Lord and Lady Duff Gordon; and Frederick Sandys, one of the most remarkable of the Pre-Raphaelite painters.

Meredith also knew Carlyle, Browning, Tennyson, Thackeray, Lowell, George Eliot, G.H. Lewes, Henry James, Thomas Hardy, the painters, J.E. Millais, and G.F. Watts, and many other people of distinction. The Pre-Raphaelites were numbered among his friends and for a time he shared a house in London with the Rossetti brothers and Swinburne. Dante G. Rossetti had leased the house and the others sub-let rooms from him. Even after Meredith had settled at Copsham Cottage he continued to visit often

the Pre-Raphaelites. Among the numerous recruits of the Brotherhood who visited the Meredith home was Swinburne, the prototype of Tracy Runningbrooke, who came more frequently than the others. Dante Gabriel Rossetti found Meredith's face so striking and full of feeling that he used his profile for the Christ in his picture "Saint Mary Magdalene."

It is important to dwell at some length on Meredith's friends and acquaintances for it was such people and their milieu which created the stuff out of which his novels were made. In many instances he chose characters, situations, and events from actual life.

Meredith became literary adviser in 1860 to his publishers, the firm of Chapman and Hall. In this capacity he had many interesting literary and personal relations with writers. For thirty-five years he read and passed judgment upon the manuscripts submitted to the firm. It was in his capacity as reader that Meredith had the satisfaction of discovering, advising, and revealing to England such writers as Thomas Hardy and George Gissing. At a meeting of the Omar Khayyam Club (a group of distinguished literary men) in 1895 Hardy said he would probably never have devoted himself to writing had it not been for the encouragement he received from Meredith at the commencement of his literary career, for when Hardy was twenty-eight years old he sent to Chapman and Hall a manuscript

entitled The Poor Man and The Lady. Meredith did not accept it for publication, but he saw promise in it and accordingly invited Hardy to come for a personal interview. Hardy, in describing the interview, said he received much sound advice and helpful criticism. He did not hesitate to accept Meredith's judgment and consequently burned the manuscript. Little is known of the exact nature of The Poor Man and The Lady, but it is generally believed that it was highly satirical and not likely to be favorably received by the public. From the time of this first meeting until Meredith's death in 1909, the two writers felt a very warm regard for each other; they were alike in that both used the novel for high intellectual purposes, but otherwise the contrast between the philosophy of the two men was great.

The possibility of victory brightens all Meredith's novels; his characters are thinking of success and victory, never of defeatism and surrender. They dash out to fight against their equals and whether they lose or win, they, at least, have the opportunity to fight. This element of hopeful combat is absent in Hardy's novels. In them we find that the brain is always inadequate, and that the unimportance and weakness of mankind are stressed. His main characters are the victims

of the irony of circumstance; usually they cannot get near their foes and hence there is no hope of victory. The contrast between the philosophy of the two men will be dealt with in greater detail later, as their characters were frequently the vehicles for their philosophy.

Meredith read George Gissing's first novel The Unclassed, and gave his friendly encouragement. Another of Meredith's literary friendships was that with Sir James M. Barrie, whose genius Meredith recognized from the first. Meredith wrote in appreciation of The Little Minister as follows:

> Dear Barrie: Our thanks are warm for The Little Minister, and how I envy you!--not the deserved success of the book, but your pleasure in writing it. The conjuration of Babbie must have been an hour of enchantment. She carries us--criticism can't grow at her heels. Thrums too is as hot alive as ever. I am comforted in seeing that work like yours is warmly greeted by press and public.[1]

The friendly relations of the two writers continued up to Meredith's death and on the latter's eighty-first and last birthday, Mr. and Mrs. J.M. Barrie dined with him in his home at Box Hill, Dorking.

[1] Letters, II, 443.

In 1909 Barrie rendered a beautiful tribute to his dead friend. The last paragraph follows:

> Box Hill was no longer deserted. When a great man dies, and this was one of the greatest since Shakespeare--the immortals await him at the top of the nearest hill. He looked up and saw his peers. They were all young like himself. He waved his staff in greeting. One, a mere stripling, slight unspeakably, (R.L.S.), detached himself from the others, crying gloriously as he recognized his master. "Here's the fellow I've been telling you about!" and ran down the hill to be first to take his hand. In the meantime an empty coach was rolling on to Dorking.[1]

Meredith discerned promise in the works of the young playwright, Arthur Wing Pinero. The following is an excerpt from a letter to him in 1893:

> Success to you! will be my cry when the great night comes(the first night of <u>The Second Mrs. Tanqueray</u>) Excellent title to set one threading a Dramatist's maze. It must hit.[2]

As a reader Meredith condemned the early novels of George Bernard Shaw; the first, <u>Immaturity</u>, he curtly rejected with a mere "no." Shaw gave an account of the matter to S.M.Ellis, Meredith's kinsman and biographer:

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[1] J.M. Barrie, <u>George Meredith</u>, 16.

[2] <u>Letters</u>, II, 459.

Immaturity was my first novel, written in 1879. It was refused by every publisher in London, as were its four successors; and, unlike them it remains in Ms. (if the mice have not eaten it) to this day. George Meredith shared the guilt of its refusal. I fear he repeated the crime with the other four--certainly with Cashel Byron's Profession. All my novels were refused everywhere. For nine years I was rated as unprintable; and it was only in the case of the hopelessly old-fashioned and literary Immaturity that there was any hesitation.

Once when I had achieved the feat of speaking in the open air at Trafford Bridge [Manchester] for four hours at one stretch, a plot was laid by Henry Salt, Clement Shorter, and others, to take me down to Box Hill on the understanding that I should start talking the moment I entered the house and not let George Meredith get a word in edgeways. But it never came off; and I did not make the pilgrimage and the acquaintance until shortly before his death.[1]

If the talking duel between Shaw and Meredith had materialized it undoubtedly would have proved most amusing and diverting, for Meredith was famous as a conversationalist; many good judges held that he was the finest talker of his time. His conversation, like his best writing, had an immense range and sparkled with brilliant wit, poetry, and humor.

Meredith's seventieth birthday in 1898 was celebrated with every demonstration of affection and respect, and included the presentation of a congratulatory address signed by notable people, many of them his

[1] S.M. Ellis, George Meredith; His Life and Friends in Relation to His Work, 212.

personal friends. Among the signatories were J.M. Barrie, Thomas Hardy, Conan Doyle, Henry James, Edmund Gosse, Alice Meynell, John Morley, Leslie Stephen, and A.C. Swinburne. The address was worded:

> Some comrades in letters who have long valued your work send you cordial greeting upon your seventieth birthday. You have attained the first rank in literature after many years of inadequate recognition. From first to last you have been true to yourself and have always aimed at the highest mark. We are rejoiced to know that merits once perceived by only a few are now appreciated by a wide and steadily growing circle. We wish you many years of life, during which you may continue to do good work, cheered by the counsciousness of good work already achieved, and encouraged by the certainly of a hearty welcome from many sympathetic readers.[1]

William Sharp, who sometimes used the pseudonym Fiona McLeod, was another of Meredith's friends. He gave a charming picture of Meredith as a naturalist in an article for the Pall Mall Magazine for 1904. Meredith and Mrs. Alice Meynell expressed a mutual admiration for each other's poetry, they corresponded, and the Meynell family often visited at Box Hill. The poet, W.E. Henley sometimes accompanied Stevenson on his visits to Meredith.

The foregoing enumeration has not exhausted by any means the list of Meredith's literary and personal associations. A complete compilation would be lengthy,

[1] S.M. Ellis, George Meredith: His Life and Friends in Relation to His Works, 308.

However, those mentioned show that Meredith was surrounded by a host of friends--most of whom were highly intelligent; many--artists, writers, and others--were notable in various fields. In his novels, too, the intellect has a place of supremacy. In the distinguished circle of his friends are many prototypes of Meredithian characters. The letters of Meredith and supplementary facts furnished by his son William Maxse Meredith contain certain evidence that he used friends and acquaintances as models for his characters.

In the Meredithian gallery are sketches of Leslie Stephen and William Hardman, the intellectual rationalists, as Vernon Whitford in The Egoist, and Blackburn Tuckham in Beauchamp's Career. Other noteworthy portraits are those of Stevenson, Swinburne, Admiral Maxse, Janet Duff Gordon, and Sheridan's gifted and beautiful granddaughter, Mrs. Caroline Norton.

The characters in Meredith's novels are not photostatic copies of contemporaries and acquaintances. Meredith's highly creative imagination had important contributions to make, also. However, a number of his gifted, distinguished friends suggested heroes and heroines to him; in life they were splendid people--courageous, dynamic, idealistic--and in the pages of his fiction we meet such people. His chief characters possess physical

and intellectual health and a wholesome outlook upon life. They are endowed by nature with right instincts, emotions, and common sense. Characters possessing a delightful coordination of health, strong mentality, and right feelings, are numerous, among them being Vernon Whitford, Gower Woodseer, Nevil Beauchamp, Rose Jocelyn, and Diana Warwick. Their living prototypes were listed among Meredith's friends and acquaintances.

In the milieu of Meredith's novels, which is that of the upper social classes, move the people to whom circumstance has given the benefits of civilization. They are usually well-bred and possess the comforts and pleasures that money can buy; many are of high social rank. Very few are occupied with menial tasks. For the most part this novelistic world is made up of captains, majors, earls, lords, members of parliament, gouty and choleric squires, scholars, poets, women of intelligence, rank, and beauty. Meredith knew such people in life.

CHAPTER III

MEREDITH'S CONTEMPORARIES, FRIENDS AND ACQUAINTANCES AS MODELS FOR CHARACTERS IN HIS NOVELS

Prototypes of Chief Characters

Diana of the Crossways brought to Meredith greater success and fame than did any previous production. It sped through editions with celerity, and one reason it did so was that many readers believed it to be an authentic narrative concerning the life of Mrs. Caroline Norton, who was a notable personage of her time.

That Diana, who is doubtlessly his most famous heroine, was suggested to him by the gifted Caroline Norton, Meredith states, in the following letter written to Stevenson in 1884:

> I am just finishing at a great pace a two-volume novel to be called Diana of the Crossways--partly modelled upon Mrs Norton. But this is between ourselves.[1]

Meredith had met at Lady Duff Gordon's the famous literary beauty, Mrs. Caroline Norton who was the granddaughter of Richard Brinsley Sheridan, the dramatist.

[1] Letters of George Meredith, II, 355.

She was then very popular in London social circles; in fact, she and her two sisters, Helen and Georgiana, had been designated as the "three graces" of London society in the reign of George IV.

Andre' Maurois in his biography of Disraeli gives the following description of Diana's prototype at the time when Disraeli was in attendance at one of her dinner parties:

> The tiny drawing room was filled with a tightly packed crowd of politicians and celebrated men of letters, and positively illuminated by the extraordinary beauty of the Sheridans. In one arm-chair sat the mother, of whom it was said that she remained more beautiful than any woman in the world except her three daughters... Mrs. Norton had black hair which she coiled in tresses round her head, the features of a Greek beauty, and an adorable way of blushing. If some phrase in the conversation touched her, a pinkish tint would suddenly mingle with her slightly olive hue, linger for an instant--and vanish. Her eyes and lips flashed such color that she seemed to be made of precious stones; diamonds and rubies and sapphires. Her sister, Lady Seymour, with her pale and limpid complexion, was quite different, and her softly lit eyes looked like fountains in the light of the moon. When any one commented to Mrs. Norton on the emotion left by such a galaxy of beauty, she would look round her tiny drawing-room and her dazzling family with a complacent smile, and say: "Yes, we are rather good-looking people."[1]

Mrs. Blackwood, who later became Lady Duffering, described the three sisters to Disraeli as follows: "You see Georgey's the beauty, and Carrie's the wit, and I ought to be the good one, but then I am not."[2]

[1] A. Maurois, Disraeli, A Picture of the Victorian Age, 72.

[2] Ibid., 73.

With admirable portraiture Meredith has done justice to the intelligence, wit, and beauty of Diana's model. To what extent he idealized her in other respects is difficult to determine, for his heroine is, of course, his own creation. He has used in the plot of the novel a number of incidents from the eventful life of Caroline Norton, but as he said in his letter to Stevenson, the book was only "partly modelled" upon Mrs. Norton--he utilized whatever facts concerning her life and personality that interested him, but he was not writing her biography. It has been proved that the central episode of the novel (in which Diana revealed to a newspaper editor a secret entrusted to her) had no historical foundation.[1] Lord Aberdeen stated that he had communicated the intention of the government to repeal the Corn Laws to the editor of the Times, and there was no sort of bribery or intrigue in the action. However, malicious gossip had once spread the romor that Mrs. Norton had sold this information to the editor though it had been confided to her as a state secret. With the appearance of Diana the old scandal was revived for the reading public recognized the heroine as Mrs. Norton and many believed her guilty of the offense--identifying her too closely with Diana. Meredith had probably never believed

[1] J.G. Perkins, Life of Mrs. Norton.

the story regarding Mrs. Norton and when requested by Lord Dufferin, Caroline Norton's brother-in-law, to introduce a refutation of it in vindication of her, he at once added the following prefatory note:

> A lady of high distinction for wit and beauty, the daughter of an illustrious Irish House, came under the shadow of a calumny.
>
> it has latterly been examined and exposed as baseless. The story of Diana of the Crossways is to be read as fiction.

It was not the matter of the Corn Law secret which attracted Meredith to the subject, but Caroline Norton's position in other relations of life. She was an outstanding victim of the unjust marriage and divorce laws as they affected English women in the Victorian era. When only nineteen years of age she had made an unfortunate marriage with the Honorable George Norton, brother of Lord Grantley. After three years of the intolerable marriage, she had left his house for her sister's. On numerous good promises of his, she had returned, thus condoning all, but she found matters worse. The culmination of her husband's persecutions came in the suit he brought against Lord Melbourne for the seduction of his wife. The case against Lord Melbourne was so weak that the jury decided against Norton without leaving the box although witnesses had been called for the defense.

Norton later stated that he did not believe the charge brought against his wife. It was suggested that a political conspiracy was responsible for involving Melbourne in the scandal--that Norton was urged to make the accusation by Melbourne's political foes in the hope that the notoriety would invalidate his influence and prevent his being Prime Minister when the Princess Victoria should succeed William IV to the throne. However, he became Premier and Queen Victoria received Mrs. Norton at court. The inference made was that the Queen wished to be just to an injured woman.

After the action against Lord Melbourne, George Norton requested his wife to return to his home, but this she refused to do. They lived separately for almost fifty years. Proceedings were again entered between them in 1853 because he failed to pay her allowance and also demanded the proceeds from her books. Mr. Norton was a lawyer and knew that a married woman was incapable of owning any property apart from her husband, according to law. Caroline Norton was, however, a valiant defender of her rights and those of her sex. She said: "I have learned the English law by suffering piece-meal under it."[1]

[1] J.G. Perkins, Life of Mrs. Norton, 159.

She wrote an eloquent letter to the queen on the marriage and divorce laws. She also published a pamphlet on "English Laws for Women in the Nineteenth Century." Her husband had taken their children from her and left them with his relatives, refusing to let her see them. She was finally accorded by law the right to see them. Her appeals for action to members of parliament whom she knew and her writings accomplished much in bringing about changes in the legal status of married women. Always when suffering under what she felt to be intolerable wrongs she resorted to her pen.

> I looked to my pen to extricate me as a soldier trusts to his sword to cut his way through.[1]

Likewise, Diana, striving to gain economic independence, in an age that frowned upon independence for women, looked to her pen for rescue. Her husband had brought suit against her. She had no allowance of any sort. Perhaps more than any other factor, Diana's fight for economic independence won her the title of "the first modern heroine" which many critics have bestowed upon her. Though untrained for any gainful occupation

[1] J.G. Perkins, Life of Mrs. Norton, 130.

she refuses to be considered helpless like other Victorian women. In this respect, she bears a striking similitude to Caroline Norton. "Ink is my opium, and the pen my nigger, and he must dig up gold for me."[1]

For many years Mrs. Norton earned her living by her pen. She did a considerable amount ofhack-work for the magazines, and in addition wrote novels and books of poems. These were very popular at the time, although they are now out of print. The reviews were very favorable and her publications flew "over editions clean as a doe the gates and hedges," as Meredith said of Diana's first book, The Princess Egeria.

Mrs. Norton was a humanitarian, and the first of her appeals to the public to better the condition of the little children employed in the factories was her long poem, "The Voice from the Factories." The need for reform is pointed out in nearly all her writings. Seven years later Mrs. Browning also depicted the miserable plight of these children and made a plea for reform in "The Cry of the Children." A quotation from Mrs. Norton's poem follows:

Ever a toiling child does make us sad:
'Tis an unnatural and mournful sight,
Because we feel their smiles should be so glad,
Because we know their eyes should be so bright,
Why is it then, that tasked beyond their might,
They labor all day long for others' gain,--
Nay, trespass on the still and pleasant night,
While uncompleted hours of toil remain?
Poor little Factory Slaves--for you these lines complain.

Yet in the British senate men rise up,
(The freeborn and the fathers of our land!
And while these drink the dregs of Sorrow's cup,
Deny the sufferings of the pining band.
With nice-drawn calculations at command
They prove--rebut--explain--and reason long;
Proud of each shallow argument they stand,
And prostitute their utmost powers of tongue
Feebly to justify this great and glaring wrong.

Shall we...
Revoke the glory of our former years,
And stain Brittania's flag with children's tears?[1]

Her writings give proof of a mind, ardent and humane, appealed to by all generous and noble impulses. Her long poem The Child of the Islands was another eloquent condemnation of child labor.

Nearly all of Mrs. Norton's writings have a sociological significance, and that she influenced Mrs. Gaskell, another reforming spirit of the time, seems certain. Mrs. Gaskell too, took up the cudgels in behalf of the exploited children and other victims

[1] C.E. Norton, Poems, I, 249.

of the machine age. In her novel, Mary Barton, she quotes Mrs. Norton's Child of the Islands:

> A life of self-indulgence is for us,
> A life of self-denial is for them;
> For us the streets broad-built and populous,
> For them unhealthy corners, garrets dim,
> And cellars where the water-rat may swim'.
> For us green paths refreshed by frequent rain,
> For them dark alleys where the dust lies grim!
> Not doomed by us to this appointed pain--
> God made us rich and poor--of what do these complain?

The Dream and Other Poems appeared in 1840; Aunt Carry's Ballads in 1847, dedicated to her nephews and nieces. Her last poem was the Lady of La Garaye, 1862. She wrote three novels, Stuart of Dunleath, 1851; Lost and Saved, 1863; and Old Sir Douglas, 1868. In reviewing for the Quarterly, her book of poems which appeared in 1840, Hartley Coleridge named her first of British women then writing poetry. Mrs. Browning came second in the list, and the other names are now forgotten. It was in this review that Mrs. Norton received her famous title, "The Byron of Modern Poetesses."

At many points the incidents of the story coincide with those in the life of Caroline Norton. Both Diana and Mrs. Norton are of Irish blood; both are gifted, generous, and impulsive. Also thrown upon her own

resources, Diana earns her living by writing. She refers to "my old London cab-horse of a pen," which must keep on jogging because the "race between Debit and Credit" is so close.

Diana and Caroline Sheridan marry men totally unsuited to them by temperament. Warwick, Diana's husband is a cold, self-satisfied person whom Lady Dunstone compared to "a house locked up and empty: a house furnished and decorated by the upholsterer and empty of inhabitants."[1]

George Norton is described as "narrow-spirited, intolerant, slow-witted, coarse-natured, and self-indulgent with a capacity for brutality and slow revenge."[2]

The first chapter of Diana discusses comments made of her in contemporary diaries. Anecdotes, epigrams, and drolleries bubbled on her lips and she was much quoted.. Descriptions of Diana and Mrs. Norton are interchangeable. The following statement of Charles Sumner, the American jurist, typifies what people thought of the latter lady:

> The beauty of Mrs. Norton nas never been exaggerated. It is brilliant, and refined. Her countenance is lighted by eyes of the intensest brightness and her features are are of the greatest regularity. There is something tropical in her lock, it is so intensely bright and burning, with large dark eyes, dark hair, and italian complexion.

[1] G. Meredith, Diana of the Crossways, 61.

[2] J.G. Perkins, Mrs. Norton, 82.

And her conversation is so pleasant and powerful..I count her one of the brightest intellects I have ever met.[1]

In Diana of the Crossways, the fictional heroine creates many noteworthy phrases. We mention a few: "All life is a lesson we live to enjoy but in the spirit!" "Those that have souls meet their fellows there;" "When we are beginning to reflect we have the world at dawn."

Meredith himself describes the counterpart of Mrs. Norton in glowing terms:

> She had eyes like stars of winter's night. She was a queenly comrade, a spirit leaping and shining like mountain water...The judgment was taken captive and flowed with her....the beautiful, dark-eyed, fresh creature, who bore the name of the divine huntress... a true Dian in stature, step and attributes, the genius of laughter superadded. None else on earth so sweetly laughed, none so spontaneously, victoriously provoked the healthful openness. Her delicious chatter, and her museful sparkle in listening, equally quickened every sense of life.[2]

[1] Pierce, Life of Sumner.

[2] Diana of the Crossways, 19.

Meredith once remarked that Beauchamp's Career was his favorite among his books. Perhaps one reason for his preference was that in its pages he had penned the portraits of two of his dearest friends--William Hardman as Blackburn Tuckham and Admiral William Maxse as the unselfish, courageous, idealistic Nevil Beauchamp--the hero of the story.

> There have been few friendships in this world deeper, warmer, more vigorous, more consoling, or more fruitful than the friendship of Maxse and Meredith; until they were old men, their haunts echoed with the exchange of their chaff. It was Meredith's part, and not uncongenial, to counsel prudence. Maxse's fanaticism shocked him almost as much as Swinburne's indecency: he pierced its protuberances with the broadsword of his laughter,[1]

remarks Sencourt, who gives the following description of Maxse:

> With a short beard and wavy hair, good looks, a good figure, and an air of charm, dressed in the individual style of a naval officer of breeding, in which you can see neatness plucking at disorder, Maxse seemed certainly distinguished, as with a desire to serve, he loked out on mankind from his deep eyes with a melancholy intensity. He consulted Meredith not only on marriage but on diet: having made up his mind to follow Carlyle to the end, and to sacrifice his digestion, he gives us a picture of the hero as dyspeptic. Meredith gently reasoned with him...,[2]

Meredith first met William Frederick Maxse in 1858 (the friendship continued forty two years until Maxse's death in 1900). Maxse was then a young officer of the navy who had served with distinction in the Crimean War; after the

[1] R.E. Sencourt, The Life of George Meredith, 57.

[2] Ibid., 59.

battle of Alma he had displayed conspicuous gallantry in carrying Lord Raglan's dispatches through the enemies' lines from the army to the fleet. Later he attained the rank of Admiral.

Maxse also had marked literary tastes and was a deep thinker, much concerned with social and economic problems. Carlyle was one of his favorite authors(as he was Beauchamp's also) and Maxse pored over the philosophy of Heroes and Hero Worship.

> That a man's first thought must be his country was to him the first and great commandment. Ich dien was his motto. In him, as in the Elizabethans, action and imagination went hand in hand. He loved Carlyle for giving him something to puzzle over, and a vague feeling of great mysteries beyond. It was enough to make him devoted to realise that there was more in a book than there was in himself.[1]

Maxse's patriotism led to his desire for political reform and he became the Radical candidate for Parliament from Southampton in 1868. Since Maxse belonged to the upper class he shocked his family and many friends by so doing. He was so much of an extremist in his views (at least so considered in the Victorian era) that he not only horrified the Conservatives but frightened the Radicals; as he denounced abuses in Parliament with intensity the Conservative Liberals did their best to ignore him. Thus he is "scarcely believed in by any class", and is hated by his own as Meredith comments in one of his letters referring to the hero of Beauchamp's Career. Maxse's radical tendencies in these days

[1] R.E. Sencourt, The Life of George Meredith, 98.

were the outcome of his experiences of the government's unpreparedness for the Crimean War and the sufferings he saw and endured in the campaign.

During this election Meredith actively campaigned for his friend but he was defeated. Maxse was also beaten in the contest for Middlesex in 1874. After campaigning for two months Meredith wrote to his son Arthur,

> We were badly beaten at Southampton but I think it will be proved bribery was done there. We, on our side, were not guilty of it, I know. It is a very corrupt place. It has been found by experience of the enlarged franchise that where there are large labouring populations depending upon hire(especially in a corrupt and languishing town like Southampton) they will be thrown into the hands of the unscrupulous rich. At all events this is one of the evils we have to contend against until the poor fellows know by enlightenment where their own interests lie and the necessity for their acting in unison and making sacrifices. Old Toryism has still a long spell of life in this country where the vitality has need to be strong in the center of thick decay that won't be shovelled out. I fancy Captain Maxse had to pay about 2000 pounds for the attempt. He acted simply in the spirit of duty, that he might enter Parliament to plead the cause of the poor.[1]

The situation in the novel is similar--the poor classes, for whose interests Beauchamp strives, are bribed into voting for the wealthy Conservative candidate and Beauchamp is defeated.

Notable as Maxse was, little has been put on record concerning him, but T.P.O'Connor, a contemporary of his, has written the following sketch:

[1] Letters, I, 194.

Here was one of the remarkable and yet little appreciated and little known figures of his own time; who would have been forgotten--even now but a few years after his death--if George Meredith had not given him immort lity by painting his portrait in his book. But there was a time when no name was better known or more honored in England. He was a sailor during the Crimean War; did a deed of tremendous daring; and all the world echoed with it; and everybody naturally expected that he was beginning a glorious career. There was nothing that he was not considered capable of doing and of reaching.

But Admiral Maxse lived and died in something like obscurity, or a certain notoriety... He began by becoming a politician, and of an advanced, Radical type, which in the sixties was regarded as scarcely reputable--especially in one that was an officer of the Navy--I remember still the mild horror with which people spoke of this man who, while wearing the officer's uniform of Her Majesty's Navy, spoke with such merciless disrespect of so many things then held in honor... Indeed, so advanced were Admiral Maxse's views that he never was able to get into Parliament. Then, when possibly his chance was coming, he suddenly turned round; left the Liberal Party over Home Rule; quarreled, and even bitterly, with an old friend like John Morley...

The story of Beauchamp's Career is sad and touching as told by George Meredith; it would have been even more touching if it had been described as it was in the original from whom the story was drawn.[1]

Maxse always refused to make any compromise to expediency if his convictions did not lean in that direction--even though yielding to expediency would have advanced his own interests. When he might have been elected as the Liberal candidate he broke with his party because he could not subscribe to one of its policies. Similarly the unselfish, intrepid Beauchamp of the novel would not modify his

[1] J.A. Hammerton, George Meredith, His Life and Art in Anecdote and Criticism, 86.

views when his wealthy, aristocratic uncle threatened disinheritance as the penalty; Beauchamp, penniless, continues to champion the Liberal cause, though the impoverished, ignorant people he would help, are for a small sum bribed into voting for his Conservative opponent. Beauchamp's striving and idealistic aspirations seem almost futile--he is ridiculed and hated by the upper class and accepted only by the few who can enter into his idea of the advancement of Humanity and his passion for it.

It is interesting to compare Beauchamp's Career with the extensive series of letters written by Meredith over a period of forty years to the prototype of the novel's hero for these letters analyze and advise on most of the warring qualities exhibited by Beauchamp. Many of the letters were written long before the book. The following excerpts from the letters add somewhat to one's knowledge of Maxse's character.

I think you altogether too impetuous: 500 years too fast for the human race.[1]

My dear Fred,--Though exceedingly anxious to pluck our well-beloved Old Radical Admiral out of the Mixed Pickle Party into which he has taken, with his usual abruptness, this last misdirected jump, I have no hope from you of rescuing him yet.[2]

[1] Letters, I, 175.

[2] Ibid., I, 384.

when you think, you think suddenly, vehemently--with the force and swiftness of a meteor, and perhaps with the result, but in any case your apparent incapacity to listen to the wisdom thrust in your way, is fraught with incalculable evils, and more and more I feel Fred going and an eccentric force usurping his place.[1]

You appear to me to want to raise up an extreme party that shall raise the other party to extremes, and so do battle--fight for a shade; gain what Time would have given you without waste of blood, temper, and divine meditation. Between you philosophy would have no home on our planet. You presume moreover to declare yourself as if, conceiving a system to be faulty, it was an imperative duty to explode every shred of it to the winds. You must bear in mind that Christianity will always be one of the great chapters in the History of Humanity: that it fought down brutishness: that it has been the mother of our civilization: that it is tender to the poor, maternal to the suffering, and has supplied for most, still supplies for many, nourishment that in a certain state of intelligence is instinctively demanded. St. Bernard checked Abelard, it is true. But he also stood against the French Barons, rebuked and controlled them. The Church was then a Light. Since it did such a service to men, men I think should not stand out against it without provocation. You speak, my dear Fred, of the deepest questions of life. They are to be thought over very long and very carefully before they are fought over.[2]

There was a report in London yesterday that you had given up meat. I hope this is not true, though I know I used to tell you that we consume too much meat, and you (I remember) appeared to reflect on my words. The determination which you hinted, that you would by and by abstain from clothing yourself, will not I trust be carried into effect....

I long intensely to see you and walk with you: and I shall correct you very gently.[3]

[1] Letters, I, 186.

[2] Ibid. I, 170.

[3] Ibid. I, 177.

However, part of this sage counsel was given in vain for Maxse practised and preached vegetarianism enthusiastically for a time and touched neither meat nor wine. Meredith's letters to Maxse cover a wide range of subjects--from vegetarianism to the philosophies of Carlyle, Mill, Ruskin, and others. Sometimes Maxse was teased by his friend but he was also given the finest confidences of the poet and novelist.

After reading the long and numerous letters to Maxse one feels that this friend was never long absent from Meredith's thoughts. His second son was named William Maxse, and Meredith writes, "Let him be your lay godson." His long poem Modern Love was dedicated to Maxse in 1862. Beauchamp's Career was sent to Maxse by installments to be proof read.

Maxse died in 1900 and Meredith wrote as follows to his sister, Mrs. Duff:

> The loss to me is past all count. For I see him, hear him, have him sitting in the chair beside me, as on the day before he left for South Africa, promising to come here early on his return--and now I look at the hill that leads to Dunley, where is hollowness, a light gone out. But still it cannot be quite death for a man so good and true as he. The unsuffering part of him lives with those who knew him. Nobility was his characteristic, and always where that is required in life, I shall have him present... Be sure that nothing good is ever lost.[1]

[1] Letters, II, 510.

"Nobility was his characteristic," could be truly said of Nevil Beauchamp also; his vivid crusading nature and his political and social views are true to the spirit of Maxse and at times the idealism of both men is perhaps more visionary than practical. Many of the episodes in the book have their parallel in Maxse's life--though of course there is considerable transposition of dates and events and exercise of author's license.

Beauchamp's Career is the study of the struggle a brave man makes against great odds for what he believes is right. The high-born hero revolts against the domination of his class when he realizes the wrongs and needs of the democracy. His personality is winning, his purpose most unselfish; his convictions make him the Radical candidate. Thenceforth his opportunities for advancement in his profession are ruined, although previously he had won rapid promotion on account of his heroic record in the Crimean War. Beauchamp's Tory uncle, Everard Romfrey, who is of knightly blood, had reared him. He is shrewd, rough, combative. The old Tory nobleman's opposition is severe when he learns that Nevil has espoused the Radical cause. Romfrey was drawn from Maxse's uncle, Grantley Berkely, who had assaulted James Fraser for writing in Fraser's Magazine a review of Berkely's novel which he considered a libel upon his family. He beat Fraser savagely with a heavy hunting whip. So this incident in the novel was

based upon fact also. Romfrey attacks Nevil's Radical friend, Dr. Shrapnel.

Nevil is almost broken by his aristocratic family fearful lest he disgrace it, by success on the wrong side of politics. He is thwarted constantly and his achievements fall far short of his aspirations to achieve. We see in his life and in his tragic death how much it cost him to fight for the common people. Commander Beauchamp is drowned while endeavoring to save a poor child; he had rescued one child previously, but weakened by a recent illness, he succumbs when trying to save another.

Nevil's struggle was not in vain, however, because his enthusiasm for the rights of others was very contagious. He had succeeded in making a few indentations in the armor of conservatism. Likewise Admiral Maxse's influence was felt; he, too, had made a few inroads upon conservative thinking. The Liberal cause received an impetus from his life and work. Not many years after his death even the Tories, conceding to necessity rather than to inclination, were subscribing to some of the policies for which Maxse had fought.

Though he had wrecked his own hopes of advancement battling in the cause of others, he had advanced that cause several degrees, and to a man like Maxse, that was not failure. Maxse ranks among the heroes of the human

spirit concerning whom the poet who wrote the following lines might easily have been thinking:

They went forth to battle, but they always fell,
Nobly they fought and bravely, but not well;
They knew not fear that to the foeman yields,
They were not weak, as one who vainly wields
A futile weapon; yet the sad scrolls tell
How on the hard-fought field they always fell.

It was a secret music that they heard,
A sad sweet plea for pity and for peace.
Their wreaths are willows and their tribute, tears;
Their names are old sad stories in men's ears.
Yet they will scatter the red hordes of Hell,
Who went to battle forth and always fell.[1]

[1] S.O'Sheel, "They Went Forth To Battle."

In so far as Meredith ever drew his characters directly from life, Janet Duff Gordon, who later became Mrs. Ross, was his model for Rose Jocelyn, the heroine of Evan Harrington. Rose is a brave and winning girl. She is resolute in her convictions, and not heeding the prudent counsel of worldlings, she marries the man she has fallen in love with though he is far below her in social station and wealth. That Miss Duff Gordon seems to have entered enthusiastically into the spirit of her immortalization as Rose, the following quotation from her Reminiscences serves to indicate:

> Evan Harrington (which was first called He Would be a Gentleman) was my novel, because Rose Jocelyn was myself. (Sir Frank and Lady Jocelyn were my mother and father, and Miss Current was Miss Louisa Courtenay, who often stayed with us at Esher). With the magnificent impertinence of sixteen I would interrupt Meredith exclaiming, "No, I should never have said it like that;" or, "I should not have done so." A young Irish retriever, Peter, which I was breaking in and afterwards gave to little Arthur, (Meredith's son), was immortalized in the pages of the novel at my special request.[1]

Thus, as Meredith would read to Janet Gordon the latest installment of "her" story she would offer suggestions and as she said, "correct myself" in Evan Harrington.

[1] Janet Ross, The Fourth Generation; Reminiscences, 50.

Meredith had known Janet Duff Gordon from her childhood when he had held her and his little stepdaughter, Edith Nicolls, enthralled by fairy stories. She always called him "my poet" and selected the Copsham Cottage in which he lived for years as being suitable for a poet. In her Reminiscences she mentions that he lived in her memory not as the old man she saw on her last visit to him, but as the lithe, active companion who so often strode along by the side of her pony over Copsham Common, brandishing his stick and talking brilliantly.

Meredith always believed the model to be finer than the heroine he portrayed in fiction. An excerpt from one of his letters to her shortly after the publication of the book shows his sentiment:

> Maxse is very anxious to be introduced some day to Rose Jocelyn. I tell him that Janet Ross is a finer creature. If Rose satisfies him, how much will not Janet! Talking of Rose, did you see the Post, Saturday? It says you are a heroine who deserves to be a heroine. And yet I think I missed you.[1]

Nevertheless, the Duff Gordon family liked the portrait.

[1] Letters, 1, 24.

Meredith admired the charming, intelligent Janet Ross all his life. His letters to her are among his best. She was also the model for the character of Janet Ilchester in The Adventures of Harry Richmond. Janet Ross travelled extensively and wrote a number of books, among them being Florentine Villas, Florentine Palaces and Their Stories, Italian Sketches, and The Fourth Generation; Reminiscences. Besides these, she edited and translated several other books.

Tennyson had Lady Duff Gordon in mind when he wrote The Princess. In Meredith's works she figures as Lady Jocelyn and also as Lady Dunstane, Diana's staunch friend in Diana of the Crossways. Lady Duff Gordon had warmly taken up Mrs. Norton's cause against her husband, declining every invitation to great London houses to which her friend was not invited. Meredith describes Lady Dunstane as being "deeply a woman and dumbly a poet," and "her heart was at the head of her thoughts." She was a permanent invalid with a serene mind. She was the personification of kindness and loyalty. On occasions Diana's usually invincible spirit seems broken and she, utterly beaten. After her husband brought the charge of seduction against Lord Dannisbourgh, her name was on the lips of all

scandal mongers; people were saying that "Diana Warwick should never dare to hold up her head in London society again."

In despair she flees to the Crossways but Emma Dunstane sends Redworth there as her messenger with the injunction not to return without her. Under Lady Dunstane's protection Diana faces the trial. Again, after the break with Percy Dacier, when Diana longs for death, it is Emma who leads her to see that life still has possibilities. Not for a moment does Emma's faith in her friend waver. From the book The Fourth Generation; Reminiscences by Janet Ross, we learn that through-out her life Lady Duff Gordon was Caroline Norton's loyal, staunch friend.

Diana's soul is wind-beaten but ascending, and she faces life courageously once more. Near the close of the story Emma questions her: "You are beginning to think hopefully again?"

Who can really think," Diana answers, "and not think hopefully? You were in my mind last night, and you brought a little boat to sail me past despondency of life and the fear of extinction. When we despair or discolor things, it is our senses in revolt, and they have made the soverign brain their drudge. I heard you whisper with your very breath in my ear: There is nothing the body suffers that the soul may not profit by. That is Emma's hostory. With that I sail

with that I sail into the dark; it is my promise of the immortal; teaches me to see immortality for us. It comes from you, my Emmy."[1]

In this beautiful passage, it is my belief that Meredith pays a gracious tribute to the sterling qualities of his friend, Lady Duff Gordon.

[1] Diana of the Crossways, 413.

Prototypes of Minor Characters

Vernon Whitford in The Egoist is contrasted with the snobbish, selfish baronet, Sir Willoughby Patterne. The scholarly Vernon is remarkable for his pedestrian and mountain climbing feats. He was sketched from Leslie Stephen who was also a redoubtable walker and Alpine climber. He was president of the Alpine Club from 1865 to 1868 and was the first to climb Mont Blanc from St. Gervais. Once he walked from Cambridge to London, a distance of fifty miles, in twelve hours.

In describing "The Sunday Tramps," a band that Stephen had organized, Meredith wrote:

> Leslie Stephen comes down to me three or four times in the year, with other friends forming a body calling themselves The Sunday Tramps who escape from the dreary London Sabbath once a fortnight and take a walk of between 20 and thirty miles...They are men of distinction in science or literature; tramping with them one has the world under review, as well as pretty scenery. Leslie is acknowledged captain of the band. I have a very warm regard for him. If you remember Vernon Whitford of The Egoist, it is a sketch of Stephen, but merely a sketch, not doing him full justice, though the strokes within and without are correct.[1]

[1] Letters, II, 331.

These twenty and thirty mile walks were usually taken in Surrey, Kent, and Hertfordshire. The occasion of the Tramps' centenary walk was celebrated by a dinner at Meredith's home. Before his health failed he joined them in their pilgrimages. Years later when he was physically disabled Meredith remarked, "How I leaped through leagues of thought when I could walk.[1]

"You know where you are with him", Crossjay Patterne said of Vernon Whitford, and Meredith here paid tribute to his friend's sincerity, strength, and elevation of mind. "Phoebus Apollo turned fasting friar," said Mrs. Mountstuart of Vernon, flashing in a phrase the sunken brilliancy of the lean long-walker and scholar. The bearded face was noble--the head of a philosopher--"the head one expected for Socrates."

Leslie Stephen was editor of the Cornhill magazine from 1871 to 1882. He was a philosophical agnostic. He wrote some of the best books in the English Men of Letters series; also a History of English Thought in the Eighteenth Century. Through him Stevenson, Hardy, Sully, Henry James, and Gosse became contributors to the Cornhill. Later, Stephen devoted himself to the Dictionary of National Biography.

[1] A.M. Butcher, Memories of George Meredith, 124.

> The memory of his work in literature, wrote Meredith, remains with us as being the profoundest and most sober criticism we have had in our time. The only sting in it was an inoffensive irony that now and then stole out for a roll over, like a funny cub, or the occasional ripple on a lake in grey weather. We have nothing left that is like it.[1]

The friendship of Stephen and Meredith covered a long span of years. They shared many interests, even after old age had taken its toll and they were unable to continue their long tramps through the English country-side. In his last illness shortly before his death in 1904, Stephen wrote to Meredith:

> My Very Dear Friend,--I must make the effort to write to you once more with my own hand. I cannot trust to anyone else to say how much I value your friendship, and I must send you a message, perhaps it may be my last, of my satisfaction and pride in thinking of your affection for me. Your last bunch of violets is deliciously scenting my prison house.
>
> Always your
> L. Stephen[2]

Meredith's own health had been poor for some time, but by working strenuously day and night he had forced himself to finish The Egoist rapidly.

[1] R.E. Sencourt, George Meredith, 199.

[2] Ellis, op. cit., 266.

Meredith did not name any specific person as the original of egotistical Sir Willoughby. His prototype was "all of us" according to the anecdote Stevenson related in The Art of Writing, wherein a young friend of Meredith's, having read The Egoist, rushes in exclaiming:

"This is too bad of you. It is disgraceful. It is abominable! Willoughby is myself!"

"No, my dear fellow. Calm yourself," said the author. "He is all uf us."[1]

Concerning this universal type from which everyone can study traits he holds in common with Sir Willoughby, Stevenson added:

I am like the young friend--I think Willoughby an unmanly but a very serviceable exposure of myself.[2]

[1] Photiades, George Meredith, His Life, Genius, and Teaching. 78.

[2] Ibid., 75.

Blackburn Tuckham, the dogmatic Tory in Beauchamp's Career was drawn from Meredith's valued friend, Sir William Hardman, editor of The Morning Post. He came from the district of Blackburn and Meredith's nick-name for him was Tuck; these facts account for his name in the novel.

Hardman in his Reminiscences describes several of the long pedestrian jaunts he and his friend took over the hills of Surrey when the hedges were white with hawthorn bloom and the gorse was all ablaze. They reveled in the lovely scenery and enjoyed the plain fare of country inns. Occasionally they would rest on the grassy mounds and Meredith would read parts of his most recent manuscript for Hardman's criticism. After one of these long rambles the peripatetic philosophers strolled down to the banks of a stream to listen to the nightingales in the evening. On one such occasion Meredith recited Keats' "Ode to a Nightingale" and then they sang amid peals of laughter a madrigal which Robin (Hardman's nick-name for Meredith) had written to Tuck. The madrigal was entitled "Since Tuck is Faithless Found". It is partly quoted below:

Since Tuck is faithless found, no more
I'll trust to man or maid.
I'll sit me down, a hermit hoar,
Alone in Copsham shade.

The sight of all I shun;
Far-spying from the mound;
I'll be at home no more,
Since Tuck is faithless found.[1]

[1] Letters, I, 69.

In Meredith's letters to Hardman he frequently includes a few verses inspired by his friend, of which the following is an example:

Tuck, Sweet Charmer, tell me why
I'm at ease when you are by?
Have you had a round with Care,
Left him smoshen stript him bare,
That he never more can try
Falls with me when you are by?[1]

In the letters to Hardman the tone is very different from that in letters to Maxse--the former is not being plied with wise counsel. From descriptions of the self-assured, rather dogmatic Hardman, one judges that he was more ready to give than to take advice. In his Reminiscences he remarks,

Meredith chaffs me, and says I resemble in many ways the man (Cobbett) whose biography I have undertaken. The reason of his opinion is, that I come down in the midst of his many poetical rhapsodies with frequent morsels of hard common-sense. I interrupt him with a stolid request to define his terms. I point out discrepancies between his most recent sentence and some previous one. The consequence of this is that we get into long arguments, and it was only last Sunday, during one of our country rambles, that, in spite of the raw, inclement January day, we stopped a long time at a stile, seated on the top of which he lectured me, quite ineffectually, on his views of the future destinies of the human race.[2]

[1] Letters, I, 85.

[2] W. Hardman, Reminiscences, 126.

In politics Hardman was a Tory, while Meredith held in common with Maxse many radical views.

Blackburn Tuckham in Beauchamp's Career is "a very horse-artillery man of Tories," as Colonel Halkett remarks. He presents an interesting contrast to the young radical candidate, Nevil Beauchamp. The picture of Tuckham is humorously suggestive of Hardman:

> Mr. Tuckham had a round head, square flat forehead, and a ruddy face; he stood as if his feet claimed the earth under them for his own, with a certain shortness of leg that detracted from the majesty of his resemblance to our Eighth Harry, but increased his air of solidity and he was authoritative in speaking. "Let me set you right, sir," he said sometimes to Colonel Halkett, and that was his modesty. "You are altogether wrong," Miss Halkett heard herself informed, which was his courtesy. He examined some of her water-color drawings before sitting down to dinner, approved of them but thought it necessary to lay a broad finger on them to show their defects. On the question of politics, "I venture to state," he remarked, in anything but the tone of a venture, "that no educated man of ordinary sense who has visited our colonies will come back a Liberal." As for a man of sense and education being a Radical, he scouted the notion with a pooh sufficient to awaken a vessel in the doldrums. He said carelessly of Captain Beauchamp that he might think himself one. Either the Radical candidate for Bevisham stood self-deceived, or--the other supposition. Mr. Tuckham would venture to state that no English gentleman, exempt from an examination by order of the commissioners of Lunacy, could be sincerely a Radical. "Not a bit of it; nonsense," he replied to Miss Halkett's hint at the existence of Radical views; "that is, those views are out of politics; they are matters for the police. Dutch dykes are built to shut away the sea from cultivated land, and of course it's a part of the business of the Dutch government to keep up the dykes, and of ours to guard against the mob; but that is only a political consideration after the mob has been allowed to undermine our defenses."[1]

[1] G. Meredith, Beauchamp's Career, 237.

Tuckham continued:

"Property is ballast as well as treasure. I call property funded good sense. I would give it every privilege. If we are to speak of patriotism, I say the possession of property guarantees it. I maintain that the lead of men of property is in most cases sure to be the safe one."

"I think so," Colonel Halkett interposed, and he spoke as a man of property...

Not a whit the less did Mr. Tuckham drink his claret relishingly, and he told stories incidental to his travels now and then, commended the fishing here, the shooting there, and in some few places the cookery, with much bright emphasis when it could be praised; it appeared to be an endearing recollection to him. Still, as a man of progress, he declared his belief that we English would ultimately turn out the best cooks, having indubitably the best material. Our incomprehensible political pusillanimity was the one sad point about us...[1]

Tuckham, like Hardman, had a very fine sense of humor; his laughter was catching and somehow more indicative of the soundness of his heart and head than his remarks.

Meredith penned some very realistic sketches of gypsies, jugglers, and other nomads in Harry Richmond and in several poems. The common near his Copsham Cottage was haunted by gypsies. Gorse and heather, larch and pine woods were thick there, and this picturesque setting was a favorite resort for tinkers, beggars, and gypsies. Meredith said that he talked and associated with them and that they taught him human nature. He wrote as follows to his friend Jessop,

[1]G. Meredith, Beauchamp's Career, 238.

I rarely write save from actual observation. Thus my Jugglers, Beggars etc., I have met on the road and have idealized but slightly. I desire to strike the poetic spark out of absolute human clay. And in doing so I have the fancy that I do solid work--better than a carol in mid-air.[1]

His first-hand knowledge of the nomads and their elemental philosophy was to find its most vivid expression in The Adventures of Harry Richmond in the beautiful gypsy girl Kiomi; a gypsy model of the artist Sandys was the original of Kiomi. Watts-Dunton, a profound student of Romany life said,

The picture of gypsy life in all other novels are the merest daubs compared to the Kiomi of George Meredith's story. The original was well known in London art circles at one time, and was probably known to Meredith, but this does not in any way derogate from the splendor of the imaginative achievement of painting in a few touches a Romany girl who must, one would think, live forever.[2]

Concerning one of the gypsies who talked to him on Copsham Common near his home, Meredith wrote the poem "Juggling Jerry." The juggler is pictured dying on his favorite mound while he philosophizes on life. A quotation from the poem follows:

[1] Letters, 45.

[2] Ellis, op. cit., 225.

JUGGLING JERRY

1

Pitch here the tent, while the old horse grazes:
  By the old hedge-side we'll halt a stage.
It's nigh my last above the daisies:
  My next leaf'll be man's blank page.
Yes, my old girl! and it's no use crying:
  Juggler, constable, king, must bow.
One that outjuggles all's been spying
  Long to have me, and he has me now.

2

We've travelled times to this old common:
  Often we've hung our pots in the gorse.
We've had a stirring life, old woman!
  You, and I, and the old grey horse.
Races, and fairs, and royal occasions,
  Found us coming to their call:
Now they'll miss us at our stations:
  There's Juggler outjuggles all!

3

I've studied men from my topsy-turvy
  Close, and I reckon, rather true.
Some are fine fellows: some, right scurvy:
  Most, a dash between the two.
But it's a woman, old girl, that makes me
  Think more kindly of the race:
And it's a woman, old girl, that makes me
  When the Great Juggler I must face.

5

I mind it well, by the sea-beach lying,
  Once--it's long gone--when two gulls we beheld,
Which as the moon got up, were flying
  Down a big wave that sparked and swelled.
Crack went a gun: one fell: the second
  Wheeled round him twice, and was off for new luck:
There in the dark her white wing beckon'd:--
  Drop me a kiss--I'm the bird dead-struck![1]

[1] Poetical Works of George Meredith, 98.

In The Amazing Marriage appears a portrait of Robert Louis Stevenson as a young man, in the character of the youthful poet-philosopher, Gower Woodseer, whose notebook invariably accompanies him, even on mountain climbing jaunts. From time to time, he jotted down a verse and sentences which he thought profound--these were composed as he sat by the roadway, on the tops of hills, and in a boat crossing a dark green lake deep under mountain walls. At the moment of inspiration, he wrote down things of priceless value, lest they escape him. From biographies of Stevenson we know that he, too, had early formed the habit of making notations in a little booklet he carried for the purpose.

Woodseer is presented in striking contrast to the proud, self-centered Lord Fleetwood who belongs in that company of Meredithian egoists which is headed by Sir Willoughby Patterne, but rivalled in a sense by Sir Austin Feverel.

"Character must ever be a mystery, only to be explained in some degree by conduct."[1] It is chiefly through young Woodseer's unconventional mode of living and thinking that we come to know and admire him. Our

[1] The Amazing Marriage, 551.

earliest glimpse of him is given in the following passage from the novel:

Three parts down the swift decline of shattered slate, wheretravelling stones loosened from rows of scree hurl away at a bound after one roll over, there, sat a youth lusty and torn, nursing a bruised leg, not in the easiest of postures, on a sharp tooth of rock, that might at any moment have broken from the slanting slab at the end of which it formed a stump, and added him a second time to the general crumble of the mountain. He had done a portion of the descent in excellent imitation of the detached fragments, and hadparted company with his alpenstock and plaid; preserving his hat and his knapsack. He was alone, disabled, and cheerful; in doubt of the arrival of succour before he could trust his left leg to do him further service, unaided; but it was morning still, the sun was hot, the air was cool;just the tempering opposition to render existence pleasant as a piece of vegetation, especially when there has been a question of your ceasing to exist; and the view was of a sustaining sublimity of desolateness: crag and snow overhead; a gloomy vale below; no life either of bird or herd; a voiceless region.

Carinthia Kirby, her brother Chillon, and their guide who have also climbed the mountain, eventually overtake the incapacitated Woodseer, and proffer their assistance.

"I suppose I ought to have taken a guide," said Gower.
"There's not a doubt of that," said Chillon Kirby.
Carinthia halted, leaning on her staff: "But I had the same wish. They told us at the inn of an Englishman who left last night to sleep on the mountain, and would go alone; and did I not say, brother that must be true love of the mountains?"
"These guides kick the soul out of scenery," Woodseer said, "I came for that and not for them."

"You don't care for your life?" asked Chillon Kirby. "I try not to care for it a fraction more than Destiny does. Besides, I've a slack purse, and shun guides and inns when I can. I care for open air, colour, flowers, weeds, birds, insects, mountains. There's a world behind the mask. I call this life and the town's a boiling pot, intolerably stuffy. My one ambition is to be out of it. Yes, I care for my notebook because it's of no use to a human being except me. I slept beside a spring last night, and I never shall like a bedroom so well. I think I have discovered the great secret: I may be wrong, of course." And if so, he had his philosophy, the admission was meant to say.

He talked of the charm of poverty upon a settled income of a very small sum of money, the fruit of a compact he would execute with a town to agree to his perpetual exclusion from it, and to retain his identity, and not be the composite which every townsman was. He talked of Buddha. He said: "Here the brook's the brook, the mountain's the mountain: they are as they always were."[1]

Sometime later, Woodseer lost the notebook and Lord Fleetwood discovered it, lying open; after reading portions of it, he returned it to the owner saying, "You think deeply. What a power it is to relieve one's brain by writing! May I ask you, which one of the Universities?"

The burden of this question had a ring of irony to one whom it taught to feel rather defiantly, that he carried the blazon of a reeking tramp. "My university," Woodseer replied, "was a merchant's office in Bremen for some months. I learned more Greek and Latin in Bremen than business. I was invalided home, and then tried a merchant's office in London. I put on my hat one day and walked into the country. My college fellows were hawkers, tinkers, tramps, and ploughmen, choughs, and crows. A volume of our poets and a History of Philosophy composed my library."

1
The Amazing Marriage, 60.

His nature prompted him to speak of himself with simple candor...yet he was now anxious to let his companion know at once the common stuff he was made of, together with the great stuff he contained.[1]

Stevenson had been a staunch admirer of Meredith's work from the first. He and Barrie more than once compared Meredith's character portraiture with Shakespeare's. Though for years Meredith was a comparatively unknown writer, Stevenson, Barrie, Henley, and others never doubted his genius. In 1882 Stevenson wrote to Henley:

My Dear Henley,--...Talking of Meredith, I have just re-read for the third or fourth time The Egoist. When I shall have read it the sixth or the seventh, I begin to see I shall know about it. You will be astonished when you come to re-read it; I had no idea of the matter-human red matter--he has contrived to plug and pack into that strange and admirable book. Willoughby is of course a pure discovery; a complete set of nerves, not heretofore examined, and yet running all over the human body--a suit of nerves. Clara is the best girl I ever saw anywhere. Vernon is almost as good. The manner and faults of the book greatly justify themselves on further study. Only Mr. Middleton does not hang together; and Ladies Busshe and Culmersont des monstruosities... I see more and more that Meredith is built for immortality...

I am, Yours loquaciously,

R.L.S.[2]

[1] The Amazing Marriage, 82.

[2] Ellis, op. cit., 257.

In writing to Meredith from Vailima, Samoa, in 1894, Stevenson said:

I hear we may soon expect The Amazing Marriage. You know how long and with how much curiosity, I have looked forward to the book. Now, insofar as you have adhered to your intention, Gower Woodseer will be a family portrait, age twenty-five, of the highly respectable and slightly influential and fairly aged "Tusitala." You have not known that gentleman; console yourself he is not worth knowing. At the same time, my dear Meredith, he is very sincerely yours--for what he is worth, for the memories of old times, and in the expectation of many pleasures still to come. I suppose we shall never see each other again; flitting youths of the Lysaght species may occasionally cover those unconscionable leagues and bear greetings to and fro. But we ourselves must be content to converse with an occasional sheet of notepaper, and I shall never see whether you have grown older, and you shall never deplore that Gower Woodseer should have declined into the pantaloon "Tusitala." It is perhaps better so. Let us continue to see each other as we were and accept, my dear Meredith, my love and respect.

Robert Louis Stevenson[1]

Stevenson died eight months later and thus never read The Amazing Marriage which only a few days after his death began running as a serial in Scribner's. In the same book Meredith drew the character of the Old Buccaneer, Captain Kirby, from Captain Edward Trelawny, the friend of Byron and Shelley.

[1] Ellis, op. cit., 300.

In Sandra Belloni Meredith has commemorated another literary friendship. The young poet, Swinburne, friend of the Pre-Raphaelites, suggested to him the character of Tracy Runningbrooke. In describing the latter the author says his eyes were of "a graygreen hue that may be seen glistening over a wet sunset."[1]--his hair was the color of blown flame and his talk poured forth like molten lava. Runningbrooke is a young poet of noble blood. The above likeness corresponds in every detail to that of Swinburne.

When Meredith's poem Modern Love met with much adverse criticism in 1862, Swinburne sprang to the defense of his friend. The Spectator particularly had been savage in its review, stating that Meredith was a clever, bold man who found indecency picturesque and that he lacked literary genius, taste, and judgment. The review concluded by stating that the poem was vulgar and tawdry. In refutation of the charges Swinburne set to work at once and his vindication soon appeared in The Spectator. He scored the critic's violence, saying criticism

[1] G. Meredith, Sandra Belloni, 53.

should be thoughtful and serious. He pointed out the merits of the poem as he saw them. His eloquent review added much to his own and Meredith's fame. Some years later British prudery was attacking Swinburne and then Meredith in his turn rose in defense of him. An unjust review and a spirited vindication of Runningbrooke's poem are incidental in the novel.

In June 1862, when Meredith was living in Copsham Cottage, he saw the youthful Swinburne approaching swiftly along the road from Esher, waving a pamphlet. It was Edward Fitzgerald's translation of The Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyam which Swinburne had just read and was enthusiastically desirous of sharing with his friend. On the Mound in front of the cottage they read stanza by stanza late into the evening. Then Swinburne, calling for paper and pen write the first thirteen stanzas of Laus Veneris, the wild and yet melodious beauty of which was inspired by reading the haunting stanzas of The Rubaiyat .

One of the last things Meredith did was to pay tribute to Swinburne in a letter to The Times, in which he said that Swinburne's name would "shine star-like in English literature, a peer among our noblest."

To Lady Butcher Meredith remarked of Swinburne: "He had the ambition to do great work and has done it."[1]

In Meredith's last letter which he wrote to Watts-Dunton only a few days before his death, we find high praise for Swinburne, news of whose death had just reached him:

> The blow was heavy on me. I had such confidence in his powers of recovery. The end has come! That brain of the vivid illumination is extinct. I can hardly realize it when I revolve the many times when at the starting of an idea the whole town was instantly ablaze with electric light. Song was his natural voice. He was the greatest of our lyrical poets--of the world, I could say, considering what a language he had to wield...I feel the loss of him as part of our life torn away...[2]

Evan Harrington in which Meredith drew freely upon the Duff Gordon family, has auto-biographical significance also. The "Great Mel" and Mrs. Mel were sketched from Meredith's grandparents. Meredith's grandfather, Melchizedek Meredith, was the extraordinary tailor and naval outfitter of Portsmouth of whom it was said that although he measured lords, he was also their guest and boon companion. He was very handsome and tall. He hunted and kept horses and was never known to have sent in a bill. He had gallant adventures and it was rumored that he even set a house on fire for the privilege

[1] A.M. Butcher, Memories of George Meredith, 149.

[2] Letters, II, 634.

of rescuing and carrying in his arms a lovely, titled lady. Richmond Ray, in The Adventures of Harry Richmond, has numerous characteristics which suggest the illustrious tailor also. The Countess de Saldar (Great Mel's youngest daughter) in waging a battle to scale the social heights and to bury tailordom forever, though distinctly a Meredithian creation, reminds one somewhat of Becky Sharp in Vanity Fair. Her delineation was inspired, Meredith said, by the visit of a vivacious aunt from abroad. Several Meredithian commentators have pointed out that Evan Harrington resembles the author himself, and that Meredith has put much of himself into other characters also.

Priestley comments:

> All his most memorable figures, his heroines apart, are alike in this, that though they may be there to be satirized, to be whipped with laughter, there is certainly not a little of George Meredith himself in them. He may have thrown off any allegiance to their ideas, but he could enter fully into their lives and minds; and while his intellect was preparing to chastise them, his imagination was enjoying them. The two noteworthy exceptions would seem to be Squire Beltham in Harry Richmond, and Everard Romfrey in Beauchamp's Career. These two hard-bitten, plain-speaking fox-hunting squires of the old school are magnificently alive. Every word they speak positively rings with truth. Yet there can have been little of Meredith himself (except his sharp, dogmatic temper) in them, and they must be considered, at least on the masculine side, the best examples he has of close observation. But the others who stand out, the selfish wits, snobs, and egoists, owe their extraordinary vitality to his secret imaginative sympathy.

It is characters of this type who, at first standing on one side, become more and more the center of the comedy until we reach Sir Willoughby Patterne.[1]

Sencourt observes that Modern Love and The Ordeal of Richard Feverel are Meredith's De Profundis--that Meredith felt he was untrue to his own standards when he refused to forgive his first wife after her desertion. He was faced with the problem of rearing and educating his son Arthur, and he outlined in The Ordeal the results of faulty systems of education which Sir Austin Feverel perpetrated upon his son.

And this terrible defect of the quality of mercy, which accounted both for his broken friendships and his faults of style, was to torture him, and torture others to the end.[2]

Cecilia Halkett in Beauchamp's Career was drawn partly from Alice Brandreth, a well-bred, handsome girl with a delightful disposition. She liked painting and old English things. She was very fond of horses, and enjoyed yachting and trips to Italy. Miss Brandreth, like Hardman, was a Tory in politics; all her views differed from Maxse's. Cecilia refuses to marry Beauchamp chiefly because her father disapproves of his radical opinions. Alice Brandreth later became Lady Butcher and wrote the book Memories of George Meredith, which chronicles his friendship with her family.

[1] J.B. Priestley, George Meredith, 176.

[2] R.E. Sencourt, Life of George Meredith, 64.

Another friend whom Meredith appreciated greatly was Maurice Fitzgerald, nephew of Edward Fitzgerald. He was devoted to cooking, philoso hy, and literature. He was the original of the Wise Youth, Adrian Harley, the rather cynical young Epicurean in The Ordeal of Richard Feverel. Meredith and Fitzgerald had shared lodgings together in Seaford. Here the gastronomical young man and Meredith would discuss literature and plan dinners. From that time forward they saw each other frequently and had a mutual appreciation of the intellectual companionship enjoyed.

Since this study is chiefly concerned with Meredith's use of friends and acquaintances as prototypes for his characters, I mention onl, briefly at this time two novels in which the plots are based upon well-known stories. The Tragic Comedians is a semi-historical novel which describes the final love affair in the life of Ferdinand Lassalle, a brilliant young Jewish Hungarian, the leader of the German Republican Socialists. He loved Helena von Donniges, a Bavarian aristocrat. His mission as organizer and emancipator of the working class was brought to an end when he was killed in a duel with Prince Rackowitz whom Helena married a few months later. Meredith's story, appearing sixteen years after Lassalle's death, adheres closely to the facts of the original tale.

The plot of Lord Ormont and His Aminta was based to some extend upon the story of Lord Peterborough who, after engaging in the Spanish War in Queen Anne's reign, secretly married Anastasia Robinson, the singer. Lord Ormont's personal characteristics resemble those of Lord Cardigan, leader of the Light Brigade of Cavalry at Balaklava. Admiral Maxse had often spoken to Meredith of this dashing cavalry leader who was also a noted duellist.[1]

It seems exceedingly unlikely that Meredith had his father in mind as the hero of Evan Harrington, for he once referred to his father as a "muddler and a fool."

[1] S.M. Ellis, in George Meredith, His Life and Friends In Relation to His Work, has made a number of more or less conjectural identifications of characters in his books. However, I have relied chiefly upon Meredith's letters supplemented by facts given by his son, William M. Meredith, for evidence that he used friends and acquaintances as models for his characters, and I find no substantiation for the following Ellis conjectures:

The dispeptic uncle, Pippias, in The Ordeal of Richard Feverel may have been suggested by R.S. Charnock, Ellis, op. cit., 99;...Dr. Middleton suggests an echo of Meredith's father-in-law Peacock, 262;...George Ellis is the original of Crossjay Patterne; 137; ...The character, and more particularly the physical aspects of Emilia, were drawn to a certain extent from Lady Hornby, whom Meredity had known well when he lived at the Limes, 179;...The author's father, Augustus Meredith, was living when Evan Harrington was published, he being the hero, 137.

CHAPTER IV

MEREDITH'S PHILOSOPHY AS EXPRESSED IN HIS LIFE AND CHARACTERIZATIONS

Since the characters in Meredith's novels are frequently the vehicles for the expression of his philosophy of life it seems advisable to attempt a brief explanation of his philosophy.

Social, moral, and spiritual unrest were characteristic of Meredith's age. Many fought the introduction of new ideas in philosophy and science while in the opposite camp were enlisted crusaders for truth and social justice. Much of the writing had sociological significance. Dickens, Kingsley, Disraeli, Bulwer-Lytton, Mrs. Gaskell, and Maria Edgeworth wrote novels with a social purpose reflecting an eager interest in reform. To a greater degree than any of his other novels, Beauchamp's Career reveals Meredith's interest in contemporary social and economic problems.

That he had taken up cudgels in the cause of woman's emancipation is evident from the reading of Diana of the Crossways, Lord Ormont and His Aminta,

One of Our Conquerors, and The Amazing Marriage.

Meredith's philosophy presents a reaction against a rather melancholy era. The tone of the age was that of a world which had brooded over the problems of existence until it was worn out. As early as 1833 Carlyle had anticipated the struggle which was to come, and had taken his defiant stand against everything which hinders sincerity and truth. Doubt was in the air during this period. Tennyson, after a struggle, had succeeded in raising himself to a place where he could believe in a world to come. George Eliot never wholly overcame her despair over a world "to be noble and unhappy in" where "we must bear all our pain without taking opium." Matthew Arnold in his prose was usually self-assured and even dogmatic, but in his poetry is revealed his quest for stability, for balance. Hardy exemplifies the extremely pessimistic writer who seems to believe in a hostile universe in which man, a naked, shivering stranger, is pursued by a malevolent deity. In fact, to many, every outlook on life seemed clouded with difficulty and gloom.

From all this Meredith escaped. He had a keen zest for life and a belief in its fundamental goodness. He accepted all the discoveries of science and the theory of evolution was a source of inspiration to him. He saw

in it the indefinite advancement of mankind--higher possibilities for the human race. To both Meredith and Browning evolution meant continual, never-ending progress, intellectually and spiritually. Meredith saw humanity as the flowering of nature, the brain and the spirit as the flowering of humanity; the future is beyond our dreams.

> By my faith in the head, she has wonders in loom;
> Revelations, delights.[1]

Meredith's optimism is that which comes from a wide experience of life. To him life was always worth living, and he felt that we should cultivate the power of joy rather than let the good escape while we sit mourning over the evil. He did not believe in immediate perfection but his faith in the human race was unlimited. "He who sneers at the failings of humanity is the coward among us."[2]

The doctrine of the liveableness of life which was an essential part of Meredith's teaching was something more than mere theory. He lived to be more than eighty years old and was deaf and helpless, but his mind did not fail him and his heart remained young. His sympathies

[1] Poetical Works of George Meredith, "The Empty Purse," 455.

[2] G. Meredith, The Ordeal of Richard Feverel, 58.

were always with new movements for freedom and progress both in nations and individuals. The French critic Photiades paid a visit to him in 1908 and described the deep interest he took in the young French writers. Upon his bookrack were rows of recent books, magazines, and reviews. He continued to write the most cheerful letters within a month of his death and to converse with friends in his usual entertaining manner, although it was his complaint that he was regarded as an old man.

Meredith believed that the novel should be fortified by philosophy. In a letter to G.P. Baker he writes:

> For I think that all right use of life, and the one secret of life, is to pave ways for the firmer footing of those who succeed us; as to my works, I know them faulty, think them of worth only when they point and aid to that end. Close knowledge of our fellows, discernment of the laws of existence, these lead to great civilization. I have supposed that the novel, exposing and illustrating the natural history of man, may help us to such sustaining road side gifts.[1]

Meredith joins the followers of Mill in his confidence in reason and intelligence and in his appeal to the mind. In opposition, Hardy, by stressing intuition and instinct, joins the followers of Carlyle in minimizing the power of reason and intelligence, and in his appeal to the

[1] Letters, II, 398.

feelings. Meredith places supreme faith in intelligence operating through minds made healthy by sound bodies and right instincts. Hardy denies to all of these any efficacy in a world where so much is determined by chance. Diana Warwick and Rose Jocelyn overcome obstacles while Beauchamp is admirable even in defeat, but in the Hardy novels, Eustacia, Tess, and Jude fall because they can not get near their foes. They are victims of the irony of fate, Hardy assures us, but Meredith, instead of laying misfortunes at the door of fate, points at folly. "It's the seed we sow individually or collectively."[1]

Hardy often does not dignify his hero by giving him a real enemy. In The Return of the Native, Egdon Heath is the protagonist--it is the vehicle of man's humiliation and those who are in opposition to it are beaten down and conquered.

Meredith's Vernon Whitford stands in marked contrast to Hardy's Tess, for example. In The Egoist he says; in reply to the question as to whether he has an evil opinion of the world:

"You might as well have an evil opinion of a river: here it's muddy,--there it's clear, one day troubled, another at rest. We have to trust it with common sense."
"Love it?"
"In the sense of serving it."[2]

[1] Diana of the Crossways, 423.

[2] The Egoist, 112.

Nature is always coming in to betray Hardy's men and women; she is always coming in to save Meredith's, who find in nature their hope and consolation. Meredith never represents nature as a force hostile to man or in any way thwarting his interests or happiness. Earth was to him "our one visible friend," the beginning, the necessary foundation for all human accomplishment.

> For my part, I love and cling to earth, as the one piece of God's handiwork which we possess. I admit that we can refashion; but of earth must be the material."[1]

Reliance upon nature, Meredith assures us, is the first step for those who would have the rapture of the forward view." We should place our reliance "Upon an Earth that cannot stop, Where upward is the visible aim."[2]

How great an influence Meredith's friends had in forming his philosophy it is impossible to determine. That they did influence it, however, seems certain, for James Harvey Robinson in The Mind in The Making has said that whatever comes in the pathway of the mind

[1] Letters, I, 157.

[2] Poems, 166.

leaves an impression. From accounts of the living prototypes of Meredithian characters one infers that they were forward-looking and faced life courageously. Idealistic Maxse, dynamic Mrs. Norton, Leslie Stephen, Stevenson, Hardman, Swinburne, and the Duff Gordons, did not subscribe to a doctrine of defeatism. They held to "the rapture of the forward view" and most of them made outstanding contributions to the world. This life and its challenges are worthy of our enthusiasm and service--this is the message that comes to us from Meredith's characters who seem to say that living to be worthy of the name is striving, that growth is the result of struggle, and that strength is gained only by service.

As "footway to the God of Gods" Meredith urges acceptance of this earthly life, materially and spiritually. This is the philosophy of his prose and such poems as A Reading of Earth, A Reading of Life, and The Woods of Westermain.

> "Earth your haven, Earth your helm,
> You command a double realm;
> Laboring here to pay your debt,
> Till your little sun shall set;
> Leaving her the future task;
> Loving her too well to ask.[1]

[1] Poetical Works of George Meredith, "The Woods of Westermain," 212.

CHAPTER V

RESUMÉ AND CONCLUSION

Summarily I wish to state that I have endeavored to prove in this study that a factor which partly accounts for Meredith's veracity in character delineation is his use of friends and acquaintances as prototypes of men and women in his novels. In his writing Meredith utilized experience, and therefore, certain biographical facts which seem to be significant were given. His literary and personal associations with writers, artists, and other friends were dwelt upon at some length, for numerous portraits in the Meredithian gallery were sketched from his circle of friends. Since his characters are frequently the vehicles for the expression of Meredith's philosophy a brief discussion of his philosophy was given.

In writing Meredith did not attempt to reproduce people photographically; nor did he attempt to give a transcript of life with all its monotonous, wearisome details; instead, he presented life's most significant moments--a picture of life enhanced.

By comparing the biographical accounts of the prototypes with the characterizations in the novels, I attempted to determine to what extent they parallel each other. However, in any such compilation Meredith's individual temperament is also a large determining factor, and, therefore, it is extremely difficult to ascertain, for instance, how nearly the Captain Beauchamp in the book corresponds to the Admiral Maxse of real life.

However, from this study my conclusion is that the characters of Rose Jocelyn and Nevil Beauchamp resemble the people Meredith knew more closely than any other portraits he drew from living models. Vernon Whitford appears to be a convincing sketch of Leslie Stephen, but it is a mere sketch. There is greater idealization of Mrs. Norton in the picture of Diana than of Janet Ross and Admiral Maxse as Rose and Beauchamp, respectively. Many of the incidents in the plot of Diana of the Crossways are based upon Caroline Norton's eventful life, although there is much exercise of authors license and transposition of dates and events. On the other hand, Meredith invented all the episodes in the plot of Evan Harrington--at least, I find no evidence that the events narrated occurred in the life of Janet Ross, although her personal characteristics bear a striking similitude to those of Rose Jocelyn.

Therefore, Beauchamp's Career apparently owes its inspiration more completely to a friend than any other Meredith novel, for in it the author drew the character of Maxse and also used many incidents from his life in the plot of the story. The book, it is true, gives Maxse immortality, but it was his friend's nobility that inspired the writer. In portraying Beauchamp Meredith was striving to do justice to Maxse. It was after knowing him for twenty years that the novelist penned the unforgettable portrait of the man who was willing to wreck his own hopes of advancement in the service of others. The writer knew and loved a man who had done exactly that, and he consecrated his genius to the task of creating a hero worthy of unselfish, idealistic Maxse.

Likewise, the other prototypes that he used challenged Meredith. He strove to do justice to Janet Ross, Stevenson, Leslie Stephen, Mrs. Norton, Hardman, and the others. His friendships were among the best things that life had given him. He felt that work which would commemorate them must be good, indeed. "If a man's work is to be of value the best of him must be in it," he had said. He was not a photographic realist. He read character from the slightest hints; with keen psychological analysis and insight he probed for the inner motives in which all deeds have their source. For years Stevenson, Maxse, and Leslie

Stephen fell under his close observation. He knew well what manner of men they were--the hopes and ideals that guided them, what impelled them to act as they did. Meredith's faith in human nature breathes through all his work. The splendid air of reality which clings to George Meredith's characters adds to the lasting interest of his work. I have attempted to point out that a factor which contributes to his veracity of delineation was that he sketched many of his men and women from living prototypes.

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